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2320 LA BRANCH STREET, RM 1107, HOUSTON, TX

713-425-2440

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Chair's Corner



Happy New Year!

As we enter into 2018, the tradition of New Year's Resolutions is considered. Do we choose to pursue things that enrich our lives and the lives of others?

Some efforts are more difficult than others, like adding in time for the gym. Other actions are a commitment to a change in behavior, such as outlined in the article on page five, "Digital Detox without ditching your phone". These electronic devices increase our efficiency and ability to connect; however, they can easily consume more time than needed and that reverses the "efficiency" advantage.

As of the writing of this newsletter, we are still without a Budget identified for our Federal Agencies. This also affects the planning of FEB events and initiatives due to the uncertainty of agency needs and resources. As information is received and it is determined we can move forward,

information will be distributed, quickly.

With that said, there are a couple of constants that our FEB will provide: Awards and Training. Our 2018 Annual Awards Ceremony is in the planning phase now and the nomination package will be distributed upon its completion.

We are also in the planning process for our 2018 Leadership FEB class. We are attempting to have all the dates confirmed for the application. The application will be added to our website as soon as the forum dates/locations are confirmed so watch for that posting. We will also include a registration form in our newsletter.

I encourage you to also take advantage of other useful articles contained in this newsletter and look forward to our FEB activities this year!

Tim Jeffcoat, Chair

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I Expected Growth to go Easier

I intensified my focus on personal growth and leadership development during the month of October. I expected things to go easier.

7 surprising secrets of personal growth and development:

Personal growth and leadership development require focus, rigor, tenacity, and clarity. There's no hope for those who have arrived.

#1. Leadership development looks like hoeing beans, not riding roller coasters.

You may experience dramatic growth points. But flashes of growth are followed by long periods of undramatic, sweaty practice.

Growth and development are no accident.

#2. Successful leadership development goes beyond casual interest.

You're doomed to mediocrity, unless you make leadership development a top priority. Development is fantasy for anyone who can't explain their focus.

People who are growing know they're growing.

#3. Leadership development happens in community.

Leadership development has more to do with locking arms with others than navel gazing in private.

Be transparent about the skills and behaviors you're working to develop. Invite others to join you. Ask others to hold you accountable.

Growth often includes intervention from others.

#4. Trying new behaviors instigates growth. Practicing current behaviors stabilizes growth.

You stop growing when you stop trying new things.

#5. If you're afraid to fail, you won't grow.

The practice of kindness was more challenging than expected. I learned that my personal agenda collides with the practice of kindness.

Kindness often requires an interruption in current plans and schedules.

#6. Feedback is required for development.

Lack of feedback explains persistent blindspots and ineffective

habits.

#7. Leadership development is all about behaviors.

Identify behaviors that build character because character is more important than charisma. Curiosity, openness, courage, and grit take you further than style and flare.

Leadership development has little to do with style and flare.

Bonus: Growth requires simplicity.

Limit development to one focus area. Complexity short circuits development.

You might develop curiosity by allowing six seconds of silence or asking a second question, for example.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2017/11/07/i-expected-growth-to-go-easier/>



ARE YOU A GOOD BUREAUCRAT, OR A BAD BUREAUCRAT?

I read an article recently that was mainly an exercise in badmouthing government employees as “bureaucrats” (I’m not going to link to it and give the writer any more traffic). Bureaucrat is one of those words that can have multiple meanings, depending on who uses the word, the context where it is used, and even the tone of voice used when saying it.

Bureaucrats make government run, but they can also gum up the works. With that in mind, if you work in government, are you a good bureaucrat, or a bad bureaucrat? If you do not work in government, do you use the term bureaucrat as a term of derision? Or do you accept that there are both good and bad bureaucrats?

Let’s start with the definition of “bureaucrat.” A bureaucrat is an official of a bureaucracy. So – what is a bureaucracy? Dictionary.com defines it as:

1. Government by many bureaus, administrators, and petty officials.
2. The body of officials and administrators, especially of a government or government department.
3. Excessive multiplication of, and concentration of power in, administrative bureaus or administrators.
4. Administration characterized by excessive red tape and routine.

Only one of those definitions (#2) could be characterized as good or neutral. The others are negative. Petty officials? Excessive multiplication and concentration of power? Excessive red tape and routine? The sad fact is that many people view federal, state and local employees through a similar lens. Rather than looking at the good characteristics of government workers, they look at the red tape, or the unresponsiveness of some government workers, and think that bureaucrat is the longest four-letter word in their vocabulary.

Like the witches in the Wizard of Oz, there are good bureaucrats and bad bureaucrats. The people who beat other folks over the head with rules are bad

bureaucrats. The ones who go out of their way to help people understand government services are good bureaucrats. Those who lack any sense of urgency about their work are bad bureaucrats. Those who find ways to save money for the taxpayers are good bureaucrats, while those who can waste millions of dollars as though it is Monopoly money are bad bureaucrats.

In the 33 years I was in government, most of the people I encountered were good bureaucrats. They

cared about the work they did. They respected the taxpayers and spent their money wisely. They put in (at least) 8 hours of work for 8 hours of pay, and they viewed their work as public service. They were proud of the work they did, and they were good at it.

The number of people who deserve to be called bad bureaucrats is not that large. Yes, there are folks in government who love red tape, and who think you

should not put off until tomorrow what you can put off until next week. Or next month. There are people who are delighted to use whatever power they may have to make themselves feel special. Those are the folks who give government work a bad reputation. That small number of people do a great deal of harm, and they are just as unpopular with their coworkers as they are with the public.

Even though bureaucrat can have a neutral meaning, I think it is time to stop using the term to describe government employees. For the vast majority of those folks, “public servant” is a better term to use. It is more descriptive, and certainly more accurate. We can keep “bureaucrat” for that small number of government employees who do not serve the public. Or maybe we can get people like that out of government and make everyone (except the bureaucrats) a little bit happier.

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<https://chiefhro.com/2017/11/08/are-you-a-good-bureaucrat-or-a-bad-bureaucrat/>



Are You Executive Material?

Should you aim for a Senior Executive Service job? Evaluate whether you would fit into the SES by interviewing as many SESers as possible. Also, consider how well your interests and goals would align with the rewards and demands of the SES. Here is some information to help you do so.

What SESers do

SESers are leaders, devoting much of their effort to setting organizational goals and marching their organizations toward those goals. This requires making high-impact decisions about the structure and strategic plans of their organizations; allocating large budgets and other resources; collaborating with internal and external executives; and motivating and evaluating their staffs.

Rewards of SES jobs

SESers are positioned to translate their visionary ideas into reality and improve important government programs on a large scale. As one SESer said, “Everyone in government can make a difference. But in the SES, you have chance to make a big difference.”

SESers are perched in lofty positions at the top levels of government; it’s an honor to belong to the highly selective, elite corps of SESers who possess power and influence.

SESers take top-notch training and exchange ideas with other high-achieving leaders.

A new SESer usually receives a significant salary boost.

Demands/challenges of SES jobs

If you thrive under pressure, enjoy the limelight—including public speaking—and are not afraid to be accountable for organizational results, you will probably be in your element in the SES.

SESers regularly interact with staffers throughout the hierarchy and sometimes must make unpopular decisions. So only aim for the SES if you are skilled at solving problems and resolving thorny conflicts, and if you are people-centric. Warning: Brace yourself for the possibility of death by meeting.

SES jobs consume great quantities of time, devotion and toil. Aim for the SES only if you’re certain that you have the fire in the belly to work more, not less.

If you land an SES job, you may rightly feel, “I have arrived.” But you will have arrived at an organization that—like all organizations—has flaws, and you will be leading people who—like all people—have foibles and resentments. Translating your vision into reality may be surprisingly difficult.

Taken from Careers+Benefits in Federal Times, July/August 2017 edition, written by Lily Whiteman, a federal communications expert, author and trainer of career advancement and communications skills. Careermatters.federaltimes.com

How To Digital Detox Without Totally Ditching Your Phone

My phone is my command central. It alerts me to email, to calls, to news, to everything going on around me. Until recently, it filled me with confidence that I was not missing out.

That changed when I realized that I had slipped into full mobile dependency: I had stopped looking at everything going on around me because I was looking at my phone. I had stopped listening to people talking to me because I was checking my phone. Not just any people, but the people I came home to talk to, to be with. I had become so dependent on my phone that I couldn't really hear anything outside of it.

Constant alerts may have helped me avoid missing out on what was happening in the world, but constantly checking them caused me to miss out on what was happening right inside of my life.

I'm not alone in spending a lot of time on my phone.

Americans spend an average of 4 to 5 hours per day on our phones, according to e-market, and TechCrunch. And we've gotten to point in our culture when it's acceptable to take a time out from a conversation, a dinner, even watching a movie, to check who is reaching us, or what Apple News wants to push at us in the moment.

Checking an alert while in the company of others is like pushing the hold button to see who else is trying to reach us. But what about the person "put on hold"? What about the person you love who is describing a triumphant part of his day? His newest insight and how he intends to pursue this tomorrow; that clever thing he said to his most annoying co-worker? Hold please—I may have something more interesting coming in from someone I worked with three years ago who is re-tweeting something he finds

"spot on" regarding the Harvey Weinstein issue. Just a sec—my hair appointment for next Saturday needs to be confirmed. Oh, and wait, my cellphone bill is ready to view.

After I experienced too many times the disappointment in the faces of people I care for when I put my phone ahead of their conversation, I turned off my alerts. Not just my ring, I silenced all incoming sounds and push notifications. By the way, it's not so easy to turn off all of your alerts. It felt like smashing bugs running out from under a rock—I got 90% of them with one blow, but tracking down the source of the last 10% took some effort.

In the ensuing silence, I noticed that I was



gradually bringing my attention back to my surroundings and the people talking to me. My attention sharpened. I started feeling emotions from the inside and noticing them—not recording them, just noticing them. I felt my empathy—my ability to relate to people and

what was on their faces (no emoji)—sharpen. I noticed that my husband didn't seem as jolly as usual and asked him if he had a bad day. I can now remember how he answered me.

Ok, so I still check my phone all the time, but not when you are talking to me. Not when I am in a meeting, not while I am waiting for you to answer my question, not while you are mid-sentence. It can wait. I am a recovering functioning mobile dependent, and turning off my alerts, sounds, and push notifications helps me stay on track. It's either this or a flip phone.

Written by Jan Bruce, CEO and co-founder of meQuilibrium.

Source: www.govexec.com/excellence/promising-practices/2017/11/how-digital-detox-without-totally-ditching-your-phone/142839/?oref=govexec_today_nl

Why You Need to Be Bored (And How to Get There)

When was the last time you were bored? I'm willing to bet that you can't remember. If I'm right, it's because, in 2017, no one ever has to be bored. That smartphone supercomputer you carry around in your pocket guarantees it.

Don't know what to do next? There's always an Instagram feed to look at, a text to answer, an email to delete, a podcast to listen to, a cat video to watch, a news headline to click on or a Minecraft challenge to beat. Thanks to the technology, none of us ever have to be bored.

How great is that, right? Actually, it's not so great. We – you, me, all of us – need to be bored once in awhile. That space between active thoughts is where we get our best ideas. Want to prove that to yourself? Answer this question. Where or when do you get your best ideas? (I'll wait for you to consider your answer).

As I wrote a few weeks ago, I've asked that question of thousands of leaders over the past several years. The number one answer is, "In the shower," followed by "When I'm working out," and "Commuting." No one has ever answered, "At my desk in front of my computer," or "Thumbing through my smartphone looking at Twitter." You get your best ideas when you're not actively engaging your brain with something else to pay attention to or think about.

This topic is on my mind because of a video conference I had last week with a group of executives who were finishing one of our multi-month leadership development programs. One of the women in the group mentioned that on the previous Saturday she noticed that she was actually bored. It was the

rare day when she didn't have a ton of family commitments to attend to or a presentation or some other project that she had to fine tune for Monday morning back at the office. She told us, "I actually didn't know how to handle it when I had nothing to do."



That's because she's been so used to having her foot on the gas that she's become physiologically attuned to the feeling of always being busy or mentally occupied. That's great for dealing with all of the stuff on your

daily dance floor. It's not so great when you need to get up on the balcony to process the patterns or look around the corner to consider what's next. When you don't leave any space or opportunity to be bored, you're a lot less likely to make visits to the balcony where you can see the bigger picture or possibly come up with the next game changing idea.

So, how do you create the space to be bored? It's simple really. Quit filling up your interstitial ([look it up if you like](#)) moments with more input. Going for a run or washing the dishes? Take out the ear buds. Standing in line at Starbucks or the cafeteria at work? Leave your phone in your pocket. Driving home from work? Turn off the radio.

Give your brain a break and allow yourself to be bored. You might be pleasantly surprised by what you come up with.

Taken from <http://www.govexec.com/excellence/executive-coach/2017/11/why-you-need-be-bored-and-how-get-there/142570/?oref=voices-module>



Written by Executive coach, Scott Eblin. A former government executive, Scott is a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and is the author of [The Next Level: What Insiders Know About Executive Success](#).

OPM offers new rules on paid leave

New regulations for administrative, weather and safety, and investigative and notice leave have been proposed by the Office of Personnel Management. The proposal, based off the Administrative Leave Act of 2016, addresses the previous use of paid leave to employees based on different and varying regulations determined by the head of the agency.

Rather than using administrative leave as an all-encompassing category, the three new statutory sections divide administrative leave, investigative and notice leave, and weather and safety leave while providing requirements on each in three new subparts.

According to the proposal, administrative leave can be used at the agency's discretion while remaining subjected to statutory and regulatory requirements. Furthermore, the proposal states that it should be used only after the agency determines no other option for aid leave is available under the law. However, the employee cannot be on administrative leave for any more than 10 days in a single calendar year.

The uses of investigative and notice leave are also under the agency's discretion, subject to statutory and regulatory requirements and can be used when an employee needs to be removed from the work environment while under

investigation or during a notice period.

However, these two types of leave should only be used when agency officials determine the employee's presence at work could pose a threat to the employee or others, result in loss or damage to government property, result in destruction of evidence relevant to an investigation, or otherwise jeopardize the legitimacy of government interests. The

proposed regulation also requests that other options are considered before the use of these two types of leave to minimize and/or avoid paid leave usages. Investigative leave is subject to time limitations and needs to undergo approvals for extensions.



WASHINGTON, DC - SEPTEMBER 29: An American flag waves outside the United States Capitol building as Congress remains gridlocked over legislation to continue funding the federal government September 29, 2013 in Washington, DC. The House of Representatives passed a continuing resolution with language to defund U.S. President Barack Obama's national health care plan yesterday, but Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has indicated the U.S. Senate will not consider the legislation as passed by the House. (Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)

Regarding weather and safety leave, the proposal indicates that these two options can be used if the agency determines an employee is unable to travel to or from, or work at approved locations due to emergency situations or severe weather conditions. Unlike the other two sections, the proposal declares that the weather and safety leave does not have limitations.

The proposal also goes into detail on the requirements for recording and submitting leave requests. The proposed regulation can [be read in full on the Federal Register](#).

<https://www.federaltimes.com/management/hr/2017/07/13/opm-offers-new-rules-on-paid-leave/>

Managing Your Time to Manage Your Wellness

We are busy people. If we aren't busy, we should be; life is too sweet to not embrace the possibilities. You hear about "Work-Life Balance" but geesh, how is one to actually reach this balance? Probably not. That said, we sure can use tools in our toolbox to help us live more well...and bring home the bacon! As Time Management becomes a trend in balance, here are the top 5 tips to practice, practice, practice!

1 ***Know Thyself***

Before you can best manage your time, you best know what you do with it! Create a spreadsheet, or pull one off the web. Every hour, for 1 week, jot down how you use your time.

2 ***Compartmentalize Your Day Through Technology***

It's easier to stay on task and reduce distractions if you assign yourself to tasks. For example, if you respond to emails from 9a-10a every day, it will be second nature.

3 ***Eat the Frog***

Mark Twain once said that if the first thing you do each morning is to eat a live frog, you can go



through the day with the satisfaction of knowing that that is probably the worst thing that is going to happen to you all day long. Your "frog" is your biggest, most important task, the one you are most likely to procrastinate if you don't do something about it.

4 ***Be Well***

If you feel well; you are more productive. Eat more whole foods, drink plenty of water, stretch at your desk, get a whiff of fresh air every few hours, have real plants in your workspace and sleep, yes, I'm reminding you to go to bed at night! Also, your desk is a work-space, not a storage unit. If you're not working on it, have it labeled, filed, and stowed away.

5 ***Just Say No***

(but know who you're saying no to!) If you are "in the weeds" or think someone else would be a better fit for the job, remember: be QUICK in the response, Be HONEST why it's not a good time and SUGGEST an alternative person for the job.

*Article taken from the Fall/Winter 2017 issue of **Government Connections**, the magazine of the Society of Government Meeting Professionals.*

Your TSP Withdrawal Forms are Final, Get it Right

New TSP withdrawal options are in the works after passage of legislation allowing multiple age-based in-service withdrawals and multiple post-separation withdrawals in the TSP. However, those changes are a couple years out, and for now most TSP account holders will be using the two most common forms: TSP-70 (Request For Full Withdrawal) which would be used after you have separated from federal service, and the TSP-77 (Request For Partial Withdrawal When Separated) which would also be used after you separated from federal service.

Regardless of what you decide to do, when it comes time to start taking money from your Thrift Savings Plan, make absolutely sure that you (and your financial adviser, if appropriate) correctly fill out the withdrawal form(s) so that they reflect your wishes. Whatever you request on your withdrawal form is what the TSP will do, even if you made a mistake. And, the TSP will not allow corrections after the form is processed; so you need to be sure that what you request is what you want.

If you were to take a withdrawal while still employed (restrictions apply), you would use either the TSP-75 (Age-Based In-Service Withdrawal Request) or the TSP-76 (Financial Hardship In-Service Withdrawal Request).

There are two other withdrawal forms that are for specific situations. If you were taking monthly payments after you separated and wanted to “cash out”, you would use the TSP-79 (Change From Monthly Payments to Final Payment). If you are a beneficiary participant, you would use form TSP-90 (Withdrawal Request for Beneficiary Participants).

Whatever you choose, mistakes on a withdrawal form are not correctable. (As an example of an irreversible mistake made by a financial advisor: forms were submitted for a split rollover of 25% and 75% into two different kinds of accounts; after the forms were processed the retiree realized the accounts were swapped and could not correct the distribution!)

In another case, an adviser used the wrong form. In trying to execute a rollover of part of the client’s TSP account (leaving the rest in the TSP), the adviser used the TSP-70 (full withdrawal) rather than the TSP-77 (partial withdrawal). When the TSP processed the form, it rolled over the requested amount and cashed out the remainder of the client’s account in a single payment directly to the client.

A mistake in a TSP withdrawal form could have far reaching consequences; make absolutely sure that you are using the right form and that the form reflects your wishes before you send it in to the TSP.



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<http://www.fedweek.com/tsp/tsp-withdrawal-forms-final-get-right/>